DARK HORSE COMICS
#6
$2.50 U.S.
$3.00 CAN
THE YOUNG
INDIANA JONES
CHRONICLES
BY DAN BARRY & GRAY MORROW
DAN BARRY

THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES™

VERDUN

SEPTEMBER 1916

Script and Artwork by **Dan Barry**

Inks by **Gray Morrow**

Letters by **Gail Beckett**
Colors by **Rachelle Menashe**
Edited by **Barbara Kesel**

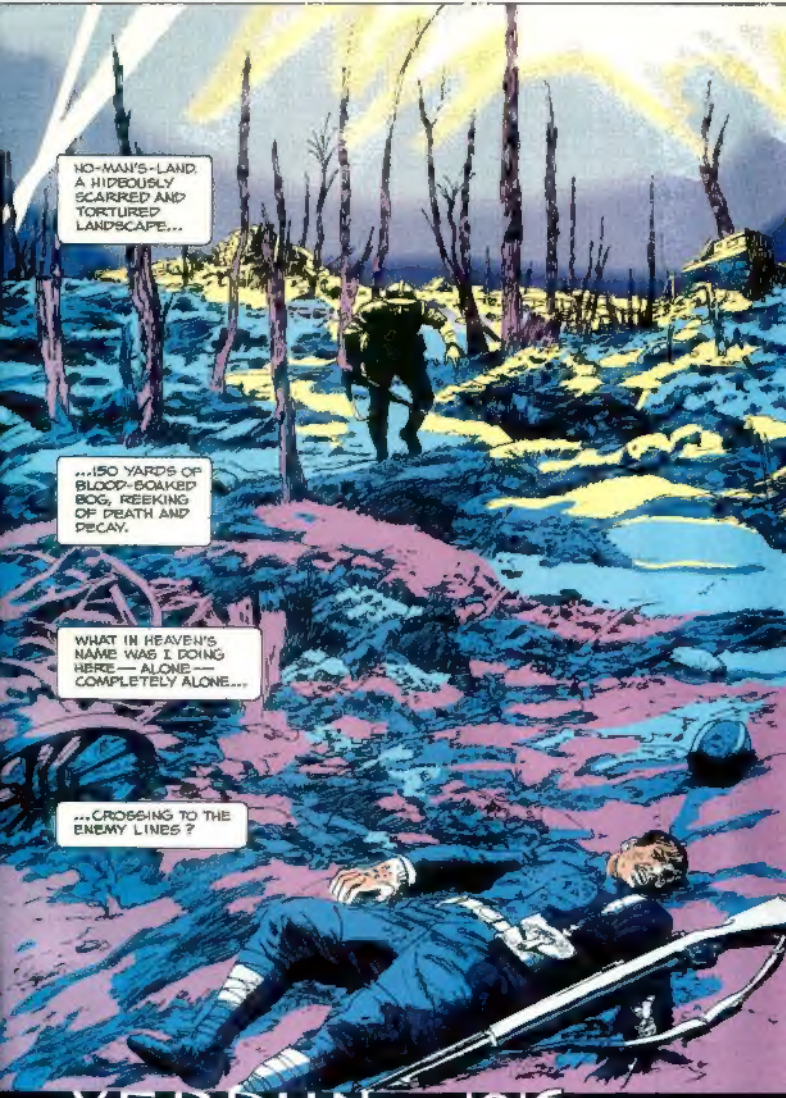
Adapted from the teleplay by
Jonathan Hensleigh

Story by George Lucas

This is a work of fiction. While young Indiana Jones is portrayed as taking part in historical events and meeting real figures from history, many of the characters in the book as well as the situations and scenes described are inventions of the author's imagination. In addition, where real historical figures and events are described, the author has, in some cases, altered the chronology and historical facts for dramatic effect.

Mike Richardson • publisher
Neil Hankerson •
vice-president of operations
Randy Stradley • executive editor
Barbara Kesel • managing editor
Ronnie Nolze • marketing director
Bob Schreck • special projects manager
Brad Horn • controller
Cece Cutsforth •
production director
Chris Chalenor •
production manager

The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles #5, July, 1992. Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 10956 SE Main St., Milwaukie, Oregon 97222. The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles™ & ©1992 Lucasfilm Ltd. The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles is a trademark of Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. Text and illustrations for The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles are ©1992 Lucasfilm Ltd. All other material, unless otherwise specified, is ©1992 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced by any means, without the express permission of Lucasfilm Ltd. PRINTED IN CANADA.


NO-MAN'S-LAND. A HIDEOUSLY SCARRED AND TORTURED LANDSCAPE...
...150 YARDS OF BLOOD-SOAKED BOG, REEKING OF DEATH AND DECAY.
WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME WAS I DOING HERE— ALONE— COMPLETELY ALONE...
...CROSSING TO THE ENEMY LINES?
VERDUN 1916

I COULDN'T KEEP THE MAJOR'S WORDS FROM POUNDING IN MY EARS...
THE GERMANS DON'T TAKE SPIES ALIVE!
VOICES. A BAD SIGN. HAD TO GET HOLD OF MYSELF.
?!
HELP ME! HELP ME!
HOW THE MOANS OF THE DEAD...?
NO — SOMEONE IS OUT HERE!
I'M... SHOT IN THE LEGS... AND STOMACH. I... CAN'T... WALK.
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
SINCE YESTERDAY.
I HAD A VISITOR, BUT I TOOK CARE OF HIM.
I'LL GET YOU OUT, SOLDIER!
DON'T LEAVE ME!
I'LL BE BACK, I PROMISE!

INTRODUCE YOU TO MY GRETL? NEVER, MY DEAR GUSTAV!
SHE IS TOO MUCH WOMAN FOR JUST ONE MAN, KLAUS. HAHAHEE!
I WILL MANAGE SOMEHOW!
OR DIE TRYING, EH?
AH-HAHAHOHO!
CRIPES! HEAVY-HANDED TEUTONIC HUMOR! YUKKHH..
IS THIS WHAT I RISKED MY LIFE TO HEAR?
YAWN
ACH! THE FRENCH! LET THEM ATTACK. I APPLAUD THEIR COURAGE...
ZZZ
..BUT HAA! SUCH STUPIDITY!
SHHH... WAIT!
CORPORAL!
I HEARD A NOISE UP ABOVE. LOOK INTO IT.
YESSIR.
IS IT TRUE ABOUT THE GUNS, GUSTAV?
AH. CHUCKLE TOMORROW WE WILL INTRODUCE THE FRENCH TO TWO LOVELY GERMAN GIRLS...
..NAMED BIG BERTHA!
OH, NO! TWO!
CREEEE

CREEE
EEK
HELP!
ZU HILFE

TWEEEEEEEEEESHREEEEEEE
BRATATAT
TATARATTATATATATATA
POOM
COME ON, LET'S GO, SOLDIER!
YOWP! HE'S DEAD!
AND THE GERMAN "CORPSE" IS ALIVE!

UMPH
NNNGH UPFFFF
SLOSH
GGRUNT UNGH PANT
KREESHH
THEENNNNNGH
BRRATATATAT
POOM THOOMVOOM
RATATAT-TATATATAT

CORPORAL...?
M-MAJOR GASTON?
QUICKLY NOW!
PONG
PTING
FTHUD
THE GERMANS ARE BRINGING UP ARTILLERY?
I DON'T NEED A SPY TO TELL ME THAT!
BATTALION HEADQUARTERS
LISTEN TO HIM, COLONEL.
AND YOU'D BETTER HAVE A SEAT!
THEY'RE BRINGING IN TWO BIG BERTHAS!
WHAT?!
THERE'S SOAP, WATER, AND A COT IN THERE! WE GO TO 2ND ARMY HEADQUARTERS AT DAWN!

I'D HAVE THOUGHT THE GENERAL WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR MY REPORT. BUT INSTEAD...
ARE YOU QUITE CERTAIN OF WHAT YOU HEARD?
YES, SIR!
CORPORAL DEFENSE, YOU'RE A BELGIAN!
YES, SIR.
YOU REALIZE, OF COURSE, THAT TRAITORS ARE SHOT?!
Y-Y-YES, SIR!
2nd Army Headquarters Souilly
ROBERT, THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
HE'S REPEATED THE SAME STORY THREE TIMES! THE GERMANS ARE BRINGING IN 420 MILLIMETER HOWITZERS, TWO OF THEM!
IT'S CLEAR HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH!
OH, GENERAL PETAIN?...
..IF WE BELIEVE THIS REPORT AND DIVERT OUR FORCES, WE MAY BE INVITING A GERMAN ATTACK!
GENERAL NIVELLE, SIR, YOU MUST SEE— AN ATTACK IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE!
I WILL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT, COLONEL BARC.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT...
COLONEL — I AM SICK OF YOUR WHINING!

I'M ORDERING YOU BACK TO THE FRONT!
TO PREPARE FOR AN ATTACK ON FORT DOUAUMONT!
THAT WILL BE ALL, COLONEL!
I TRUST YOU DID NOT MEAN THAT ORDER, ROBERT?
I DID! I'M ORDERING A NEW ATTACK!
DISMISSED!
TWO BIG HOWITZERS --OUT OF THE BLUE? PREPOSTEROUS!
GENERAL NIVELLE UNTIL I CAN VERIFY THAT BOY'S REPORT, I DEMAND YOU CANCEL THAT ORDER!
IF THOSE GUNS ARE OUT THERE, OUR MEN WILL BE MASSACRED!
YOU WILL EXCUSE ME! I HAVE A BREAKFAST APPOINTMENT PHILIPPE
THOOM THOOM VAROOM VOOM THOOM
TROOPS GOING BACK TO THE FRONT. POOR BASTARDS!
REMY!
INDY?
TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP TRAMP

REMY!
HELLO, INDY! I'M OFF TO THE FRONT AGAIN.
ABOUT THE OTHER DAY — IN THE HOSPITAL... THANKS!
FOR WHAT?
THE CIGARETTES.
I WISH I HAD MORE!
GUESS YOU'VE HEARD; ALL AVAILABLE MEN GOT MARCHING ORDERS! SOMETHING BIG IS BREWING
GOT TO GO!
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, REMY!
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, OLD FRIEND!
THERE THEY ARE! TWO 420 MM'S... BIG BERTHAS.
JUST AS THE YOUNG CORPORAL REPORTED!
AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE IS MY PROVINCE, GENERAL PETAIN. WHO ORDERED THESE PHOTOGRAPHS?
I - YOUR SECTOR COMMANDER—
I DID! AS YOU SHOULD HAVE, GENERAL MANGIN! BEFORE THE ATTACK WAS ORDERED!

MAJOR MARAT! STAY A MOMENT
SIR?
I BELIEVE NEW ORDERS ARE CALLED FOR
FOR WHAT?
TO CALL OFF THE ATTACK, OF COURSE!
YOU ARE GOING TO CANCEL THE ATTACK, ROBERT?
IN THE NAME OF GOD
WE'VE ALREADY BEGUN THE BOMBARDMENT!
CALL IT OFF!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, PHILIPPE --
I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO ATTACK.
ROBERT, IF YOU LET THIS ATTACK PROCEED, KNOWING WHAT YOU KNOW...
YOU ARE COMMITTING COLD-BLOODED MURDER!
VERY WELL! YOU DO IT, THEN.
YOU CALL OFF THE ATTACK
MAJOR— GET THIS TO THE FRONT!
YES, SIR!

COURIER!
SIR!
GET THESE ORDERS TO THE FRONT— *IMMEDIATELY!*
YES, SIR!

WHO'S THAT?
JOFFRE! THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF!
AH, N'VELLE! MANGIN!
HRMPH! PETAIN
GREETINGS, GENERAL JOFFRE HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
I'LL BE MUCH BETTER WHEN WE RETAKE FORT DOUAUMONT.
WHAT'S THAT? SOUNDS LIKE THE BOMBARDMENT HAS STOPPED
ROBERT! IT SOUNDS LIKE THE SHELLING HAS STOPPED!
YES, IT HAS, SIR!
?!
IT'S NOT TIME FOR THE ATTACK YET
NO, SIR...
THEN WHY AREN'T THE GUNS FIRING? THE ATTACK MUST BE SUPPORTED BY ARTILLERY!
YES, I UNDERSTAND THAT

GENERAL JOFFRE, THE GUNS HAVE STOPPED FIRING BECAUSE I ORDERED THEM TO STOP!
YOU DID WHAT ?!
I ALSO CANCELLED THE ATTACK!
NIVELLE, DID YOU AGREE TO THIS?
I-I WELL, YES..
NO EXCUSES, NIVELLE!
I ORDERED AN ATTACK! I WANT AN ATTACK!
COLONEL BARC!
COLONEL THIS IS GENERAL JOFFRE! LISTEN CAREFULLY! I ORDER YOU TO RESUME THE ATTACK!
I WON'T DO THAT!

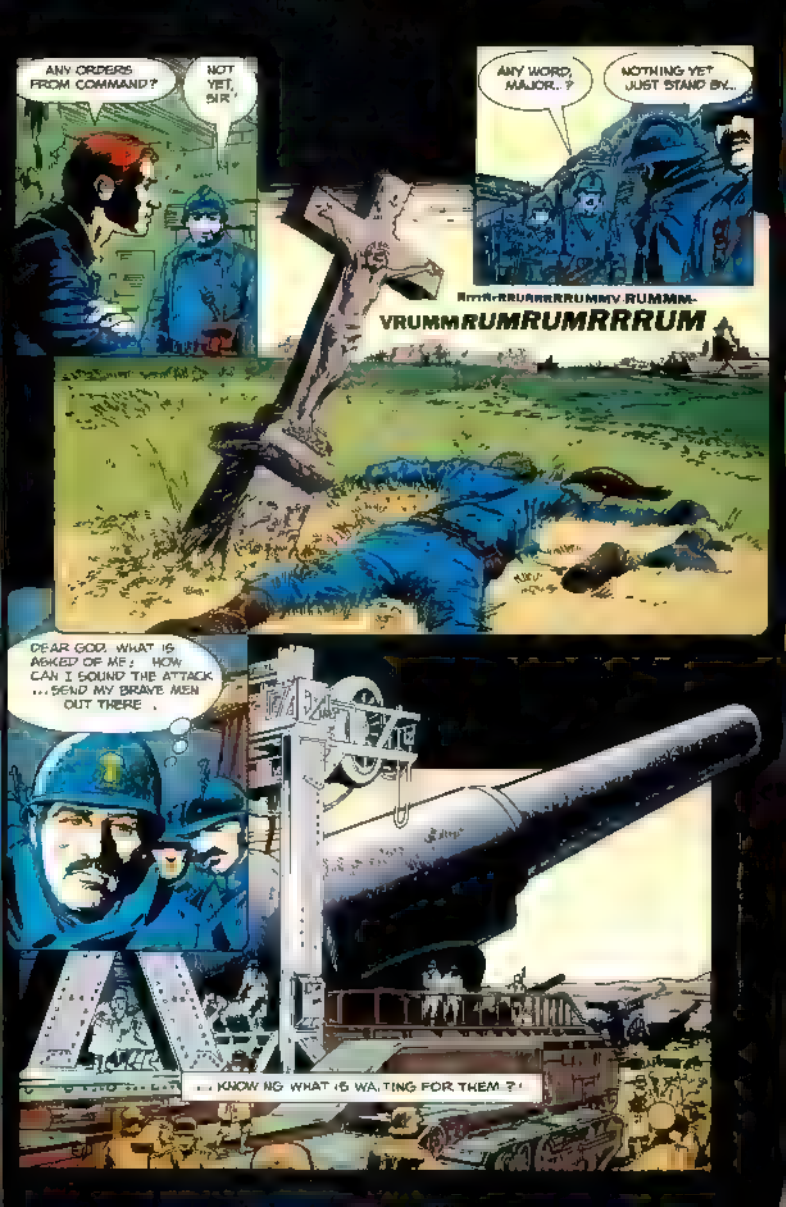
WHAT?!
I WON'T DO THAT BECAUSE I CAN'T DO THAT!
COLONEL, THIS IS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE FRENCH ARMY!
I AM GIVING YOU A DIRECT ORDER!
AND I AM LOOKING AT AN ORDER CANCELLING THE ATTACK--
SIGNED BY GENERAL PETAIN. A WRITTEN ORDER CAN ONLY BE CHANGED BY ANOTHER WRITTEN ORDER!
IF YOU ARE GENERAL JOFFRE, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND..
...BECAUSE YOU WROTE THAT REGULATION!

COLONEL! I WANT YOU TO PREPARE FOR AN ATTACK.
A WR.TTEN COUNTERMAND-- SIGNED BY ME — WILL BE A IVING MMED ATELY!
KLANG
TAKE THIS TO MAJOR GASTON! TELL H M TO AWAIT MY FURTHER ORDERS.
CORPORAL DEPENSE.
SIR..
GET THESE TO SECTOR FOUR.. AS FAST AS YOU CAN!
THEY'VE ORDERED THE ATTACK TO GO ON!
BUT THE BIG BERTHAS! THEY CAN'T!
UNFORTUNATELY, CORPORAL, THEY VERY WELL CAN!

RRRM
RRRRRRM
RM
BRM
YOUR RECONNAISSANCE DOESN'T INTEREST ME, PHILIPPE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT!
WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY GAIN WITH THIS POINTLESS SLAUGHTER?
THERE IS MORE INVOLVED THAN JUST THIS BATTLE, PHILIPPE!
VILLE DE VERDUN
VRUMM RUMRUMRRRUMVRUM

RRRRRRUMMMM
BRRRUMRRRUM
RRRRUM
MAJOR FROM COLONEL BARC!
NOT AGAIN!
RRRRRRUMBRUFBRRRRU
RUMRUM
RRRRMM
WEEEE
YOU MUST BE MAD, PETAIN. TO THINK YOU KNOW ALL THERE IS TO KNOW!
THERE IS A POINT TO THIS "ADVENTURE," AS YOU CALL IT!
WHAT POSSIBLE POINT IN A BATTLE THAT CAN'T BE WON?

VRUMRUMRRRRRUM VRUMRUMRRRRRUM VRUMRUMRRRRRUM
YOU SEE, PHILIPPE, FORT DOUAUMONT IS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL PRIDE THE PUBLIC WAS SHAKEN WHEN IT FELL TO THE ENEMY!
WHEN THE PUBLIC IS SHAKEN, THE POLITICIANS HAVE A PROBLEM...
.. AND WHEN POLITICIANS HAVE A PROBLEM, I HAVE A PROBLEM
THAT CLEAR ENOUGH FOR YOU, PETAIN?
ALL TOO CLEAR, GENERAL!
RRRR-RUUU-UMMRRUM
RRRRRRRRRRUM
BRRRRRUMMBRRRUMM


ANY ORDERS FROM COMMAND?
NOT YET, SIR.
ANY WORD, MAJOR..?
NOTHING YET JUST STAND BY..
BrrrR-RRUARRRRUMMV RUMMM-
VRUMMRUMRUMRRRUM
DEAR GOD, WHAT IS ASKED OF ME: HOW CAN I SOUND THE ATTACK ...SEND MY BRAVE MEN OUT THERE .
...KNOWING WHAT IS WAITING FOR THEM..?

RRUMMMMRRUMMMMMVOOMVRUM
SOON, MY DEAR WERNER —
WE SHALL WATCH BERTHA *FEAST* ON FRENCH MADMEN!
WHAT'S KEEPING THEM? NO TARGET PRACTICE TODAY?
VRUMM
VRUMM
VRUMM
VERDUN 13km
RUMMRUMRRRUM
BRRRRRUMMBR
SKREEEEEE
SPUT SPUT SPUT

THOOM
THUUM
NOBODY EVER FOUND OUT WHAT I DID.
THE FRENCH FINALLY DID RETAKE FORT DOUAUMONT. NIVELLE WAS A NATIONAL HERO AND, FOR A WHILE, COMMANDED THE WHOLE FRENCH ARMY.

IN 1917 HE ORDERED ANOTHER OFFENSIVE W:88 OLD PETAIN SAID T WAS SUIC DE
AGAIN, NIVELLE IGNORED HIM
ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE ASSAULT ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND MEN LOST THEIR LIVES!
NIVELLE RESIGNED AND DIED A BITTER OLD MAN
AS YOU COULD IF YOU WRECK A LOT OF HUMAN LIVES JUST FOR COLD PROFIT
YOU HEAR, SONNY?
Z-Z-Z-Z....

FINIS

THE BATTLE OF VERDUN

BY KURT BUSIEK

Last month, we used this space to tell you a little about how World War I started. This month, since Indy's still slogging through the mud, we'll narrow our focus a little and look at the battle of Verdun itself. You know from reading the story that it was the most crucial battle of World War I — but why? Why Verdun? How did the battle start? Why did it last so long? Why was it so important?

* * * * *

First, let's set the scene. It was early 1916. World War I had been raging in France since 1914, when the Germans swept into northern France. The French, after seriously underestimating the Germans, managed to halt the advance during the First Battle of the Marne. After that, things stagnated. As noted last month, both countries went into the war thinking the army that could attack fastest and hardest would win the war. The French still believed this — their philosophy was "attaque a outrance" (attack to the utmost), and they thought fighting spirit mattered more than good defenses or even a well-thought-out strategy. The Germans had learned, though — they knew barbed wire could slow an attack and artillery and machine guns could rip it to shreds — so for over a year the French had been making spirited attacks, and the Germans had been blowing them away.

Verdun itself, on the banks of the Meuse river in northeastern France, was the center of a hilly agricultural region. A fortress town even before Roman times, Verdun was important to both France and Germany. In Germany's case, Verdun had a symbolic importance — it was the Treaty of Verdun in 843 A.D. that split up Charlemagne's empire and created what would eventually become Germany. For France, Verdun had a strategic importance as the cornerstone of her defenses. After the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the French built a series of forts along the border — and Verdun was the key to the whole system. It was arguably the strongest point of the entire French line.

That takes care of the playing field. On to the players: The German Commander-in-Chief was General Erich von Falkenhayn. Though most of his military experience had been in supply, his efficiency during the Boxer Rebellion caught the eye of the Kaiser, and from then on his rise through the ranks was meteoric. Minister of War when the war started, he was chosen to replace Moltke, the initial German commander, after the 1914 offensive failed. He was stern, secretive, and capable of great ruthlessness (he was the first to use gas in combat, for instance, and favored submarine warfare against merchant ships), but had a serious flaw for a military commander — he didn't have the guts to see his plans through to the end. Instead of taking chances, he tried to play it safe — and often ended up with a stalemate when he could have had a victory.

Falkenhayn's opposite number in France was Marshal Joseph Joffre, and like Falkenhayn, his background was in supply and military engineering. He, too, rose through the ranks for political reasons — his predecessor, Michel, was too pragmatic to embrace the "attack to the utmost" philosophy, and the French military hierarchy replaced him with Joffre on the theory that Joffre wouldn't know enough about military theory to challenge their ideas. Indeed, Joffre's inexperience contributed to France's dismal showing during the initial assault. But Joffre's great strength was his imperturbability. No matter how bad the crisis, he remained self-confident — and thus gave his men the impression that things weren't so bad. This calmness in the face of disaster was what allowed Joffre to rally his armies and stop the German advance, for which he was regarded as a hero of France.

* * * * *

So why attack Verdun, if it was so well-defended? The answer to that is — precisely *because* it was so well-defended.

Falkenhayn didn't want to try for a big breakthrough — instead, he wanted to attack on a small front, in an area so important to the French that they'd commit every man they had to its defense. That way, if the Germans did break through, French morale would be devastated — and if not, the cost in lives would bleed France's armies white. That's why he had to pick a heavily-

defended spot — it had to be an objective the French would be willing to die for in vast numbers.

Falkenhayn's preparations for the battle were as unprecedented as the battle itself. New roads and new railway lines were built to bring in the flood of equipment needed to supply the assault. More big guns were brought in than had ever been used in a single operation before, for a total of 1,220 artillery pieces (and 2 1/2 million shells!) crammed together in a front barely eight miles wide. Hospitals were built and staffed. Concrete-reinforced trenches were constructed, to protect the troops from French artillery fire. And it was all done in secrecy. From painted netting over the guns to conceal them, to diversionary bombardments along other parts of the line to make the French believe an attack was imminent somewhere else, Falkenhayn did everything he could to keep the attack a surprise. Even when it became impossible not to notice that *something* was going on, Falkenhayn "leaked" the news that it was an elaborate feint to cover up an assault elsewhere.

The huge concentration of artillery wasn't the only new strategy devised for Verdun, either. The Germans used flamethrowers there for the first time, too — and airplanes, which until then had mostly been used for reconnaissance or to fight each other, were massed for the first time into an air force that would support the troops and protect the artillery. Falkenhayn was pouring everything into this operation. But then, he was attacking the strongest point on the French line, right?

Well, no. The "attack to the utmost" doctrine didn't approve of forts — they didn't have anything to do with attacks, they tied up men and guns in a hole in the ground instead of out on the field, and they hurt morale by giving the men a false sense of security — or so Joffre believed. So he'd removed most of the guns from the forts to serve as field artillery elsewhere (the only guns left were the ones that couldn't be moved) and had regularly pulled men out of Verdun to shore up other points. So Verdun was toothless and weak — and the commander there had been told not to worry, because "the Germans don't know Verdun has been disarmed."

* * * * *

So on one side, we had massive manpower and firepower — and on the other, a hollow shell. How come the Germans didn't just walk all over the French?

Well, in the first place, France wasn't completely unprepared. A few days before the Germans planned to attack, the French realized what was coming. Frantically, they tried to shore up Verdun's defenses, but everyone knew there was no time — they were doomed. Then a miracle happened. February 12th, the day the Germans were going to attack, there was a blinding blizzard, and the assault had to be postponed. By the time the blizzard ended, and the ground dried out enough to attack, the French had had an extra week-and-a-half to prepare.

But even a miracle wasn't enough. On the 21st, when the attack finally came, the Germans overwhelmed the French, pushing deep into their lines. They were unable to capitalize on their success, though, due to Falkenhayn's timidity. He had given strict orders not to go beyond the initial objectives — so instead of pushing on and dealing the French a crippling blow, the Germans halted and gave them a night to recuperate and prepare for the next day's battle.

The first phase of the battle proceeded pretty much along those lines. The French were disorganized — their assaults were inspired but doomed, and communications breakdowns often resulted in their shelling their own troops — and the Germans were too slow and cautious. When the Germans finally made a major breakthrough and captured Fort Douaumont, the most important of the forts, it was only because the soldiers who took it ignored their orders not to proceed that far. (And once they did reach the fort, it was virtually unmanned — it had been emptied by Joffre, and the orders to reoccupy it during the frantic scramble to prepare a defense had been lost in the shuffle.) After only five days of battle, the French had lost their most important fort and Verdun itself was imperiled — and it was as much their own fault as it was Germany's.

* * * * *

Luckily for France, things didn't continue that way. The commander at Verdun, General Herr, was clearly unable to handle the situation, so he was relieved of duty — and the man chosen to replace him was General Henri Phillipe Petain.

Unlike Falkenhayn and Joffre, Petain had advanced very slowly through the ranks. Why? Because Petain thought the "attack to the utmost" doctrine was garbage, and wasn't shy about saying so. He understood the power of artillery fire, and

knew, as the Germans did, that a good defense could shatter the "utmost" of attacks before it even reached its objective. Pétain understood that in this new kind of war, artillery was vastly important — that to throw men against cannons was simply to waste men, but to use artillery to precede an attack could wipe out the enemy's defenses thoroughly before troops ever went in. "Cannon conquers, infantry occupies," was one of his maxims, and in battles at the Marne and Vimy Ridge, he'd proved it. So the French hierarchy hated him and had ignored him for years. But with Joffre ruthlessly weeding out incompetent commanders, someone had to take their place, and Pétain's success, even with such a heretical strategy, earned him his chance.

In addition, Pétain had an inspiring effect on his men. He was cold, formal, and imposing to everyone, but his long years in low ranks had led him to understand ordinary soldiers in a way the other generals couldn't. He never tried to be "one of the boys," but his obvious sincerity and seriousness made line soldiers trust him. They knew that if Pétain said attack, it was because it made sense to attack, and that he wouldn't throw their lives away on a gesture.

[Ironically, Pétain's concern for his men would be his downfall. In World War II, it was Pétain who arranged an armistice with Nazi Germany rather than see his countrymen slaughtered. Once the war was over, he was condemned as a traitor and sentenced to solitary confinement for the rest of his life. "You think too much about the French," he was told during this period, "and not enough about France."]

Pétain immediately changed the French strategy at Verdun from wasteful counterattack to a shrewd defense, organizing defensive lines well-supported by artillery, and above all protecting the road that brought in desperately-needed supplies and reinforcements. And it worked. This second phase of the battle changed the dynamics of it — the French couldn't be counted on to be stupid any more, so the German strategy had to change. They began a long, drawn-out battle for two strategic hills, the Mort Homme and Cote 304. Unlike previous battles, this time the French defense was the equal of the German attack, and the battle raged through March and April, with huge casualties on both sides. The Germans slowly pushed the French back, though, and by the beginning of May they'd taken the hills.

* * * * *

Pétain had worked wonders — without his skillful defense, Verdun would very probably have been in German hands by the end of February. But Pétain was fighting on two fronts — not only against the Germans, but against Joffre as well.

Joffre, as can be expected, disagreed violently with Pétain's defensive posture. All he could see was that Pétain was losing ground — he didn't understand that an attempt to go on the offensive would turn a difficult battle into sure disaster. But it would have been political suicide for Joffre to fire Pétain while he was being hailed as the savior of Verdun. So instead, Joffre promoted Pétain, in effect kicking him upstairs. Verdun would still be among Pétain's responsibilities, but day-to-day activities there would be in the hands of Robert Nivelle, a dashing, charismatic general who'd come to prominence during the defense of Verdun.

Nivelle was a firm believer in the offensive, so "attack to the utmost" became the order of the day again. And it worked about as well as you'd think. Nivelle's first big assault, aimed at recapturing Fort Douaumont, was a complete failure, and inspired a strong German counterattack (Falkenhayn, who'd been waffling again, was reported to have rubbed his hands together with glee and said the attack was "the stupidest thing they could do"). Nivelle not only failed to regain Douaumont, he lost her sister fort, Fort Vaux as well, along with thousands of French lives.

Under Nivelle, the battle went back and forth for months, wasting huge numbers of men over tiny pieces of land. The morale of the soldiers, already strained, collapsed entirely. Men broke and ran, or refused to obey orders, knowing they were only being sent to useless and painful deaths. The response from the officers? Executions for cowardice, which must have bucked the troops up no end.

* * * * *

Once again, Verdun was in serious danger. Nivelle was expending men faster than Pétain had, and Joffre was holding back replacements, hoarding them for an assault on the Somme. He even began
removing artillery again, exhorting Pétain and Nivelle to save the town but denying them the tools they needed to do the job.

And once again, Verdun was saved by outside forces. Not the weather this time, but a stroke of fate caused by Falkenhayn's

high handedness and secrecy. Falkenhayn and Conrad von Hotzendorf, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief (and thus Germany's ally) had been at odds for some time, and when Falkenhayn didn't bother to inform Austria of the assault on Verdun, Hotzendorf was enraged. He mounted his own assault, on Italy, pulling troops away from the eastern front without informing Germany. When the Russians overwhelmed the weakened Austrians, threatening a major breakthrough, Falkenhayn had to come up with reinforcements — and those reinforcements came from Verdun.

So the next German assault, on June 22, went ahead with fewer troops than planned. Despite that, it was initially successful — the Germans used phosgene gas for the first time, hampering the French gunners badly, and ended up penetrating so far that their machine-gun fire reached the streets of Verdun itself. But they simply didn't have enough men to support such an advance. Nivelle rallied a stirring defense that, while it couldn't force the Germans back, at least kept them from penetrating any further.

On top of this, the long-promised British and French assault on the Somme occurred, and while it failed, it drained the Germans' ability to mount an effective assault even further.

* * * * *

That was the beginning of the end for the Germans — they simply didn't have the manpower anymore. They tried another assault, but this time, thanks to improved gas masks, the gas didn't work. The gunners simply waited until the Germans began their assault, and then opened fire, decimating the German troops.

Now it was the French who were pushing forward, and the Germans who, unwilling to give an inch, were being "bled white" by attrition. The fighting — and the dying — continued through August, and for the first time, German casualties outnumbered French. On August 28, Falkenhayn was replaced as Commander-in-Chief by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, who, horrified by what he saw at Verdun, closed down the German offensive immediately.

That wasn't the finale, though. On October 23, Petain and Nivelle mounted a counteroffensive. It was Petain's chance to mount an attack the way he thought it should work — with artillery bearing the brunt of the assault, and the infantry holding back until Petain was sure they could win through. And once again, he was right. Fort Douaumont was recaptured, as was Fort Vaux a week later, and the Germans pushed back two miles from the forts.

And that was it, really — there were minor skirmishes at Verdun until the end of the war, but the real battle was over. At one time or another, 70% of the French army had fought at Verdun, and while no one can say for sure how many people died at Verdun, one estimate puts French and German losses at nearly 1.25 million — 420,000 dead and 800,000 gassed or wounded — roughly the equivalent of Great Britain's losses for all of World War II.

* * * * *

The repercussions of Verdun echoed for years. Though France technically won the battle, it was her last hurrah. She'd kept the war from being lost, but no longer had the strength to win it — the British and the Americans had to take over for her. And in a very real way, Verdun was the reason France was crushed so swiftly in World War II. The lesson the French took from Verdun was that defense was all — so they built the Maginot Line, a chain of gun cupolas protecting the border. But the Germans learned a different lesson at Verdun — that trench warfare doesn't work if you're the attacker — which resulted in their tank corps and blitzkrieg tactics that swept around the Maginot Line in 1940 like it wasn't there.

But the first major repercussion of Verdun for Germany was the loss of the war. They could have won the battle several times — and won a strategic and symbolic victory so great that France would not have survived — but Falkenhayn was too timid, and let his chances slip away. The result was a battle that drained both countries — and since Germany was the one behind the blockade, it ended up hurting her more than it did France. The war may not have ended at Verdun — but the Germans lost there nonetheless.

* * * * *

SO OKAY, WHAT NEXT? Africa again! Remember when Indy went on safari with Teddy Roosevelt? Well, next issue, the teenage Indy is back in that neck of the woods, fighting against the Germans in East Africa and crossing paths with Dr. Albert Schweitzer, of all people. No more mud and trenches and barbed wire — this time we've got rivers and mosquitoes and sizzling jungle heat for you! Don't miss it, you hear?